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HELICON HILL



*Decorations by
C. Lovat Fraser*

Helicon Hill

Being a Pleasant Posy of rather
Wild Flowers gathered on the
foothills of Parnassus and
judged very meet for the
brows of Contem-
porary Rhymers

By Felix Folio

Gent. of London

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THE APOLOGY

*SILENCE is golden.
Reader, wilt
Thou say my breaking
It is—guilt?*



Helicon Hill



THE EXHORTATION

O H, do not ask that my attempts in rhyme
Shall in the highest spirit of poesy
Conceived be. Or that my muse with time
Shall pace it out into eternity.

But to each page thy gentle favour lend
And read my volume to the bitter end.

Nor ask thou how to publish this I dare,
Nor be thou over curious to know
If I who trill and twitter am aware
How hard the immortal trumpet is to blow.
Thy kindly glances on my rhyming spend
And try to read the volume to the end.

My passion all too precious is to find
A place in aught so cold as inky ode ;
Nor any thoughts that may appoint my mind
Shalt thou expect released from their abode.
Sans passion, feeling, thought thy way shalt
wend
These pages through unto the bitter end.

When Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth each
has proved
A dainty morsel for the tooth of time,
And mighty music leaves thy heart unmoved

Thou shalt bethink thee of my votive rhyme.
And half in wonder, half in pity bend
Thine eyes upon these pages—to what end ?





HELICON HILL

On the Occasion of a Mass Meeting

ROLAND ROULADE, the reigning poet-
aster,
Beckoned the poets waiting on his nod,
Urging the backward-hanging to come faster
Across the sunlit quad
To him their god,
Who stood at hand his wisdom to dispense
To an intense
Agglomeration of admiring bards
Who called him Master,
A promise lightly given to fulfil ;
To teach them all the skill
Of ready rhyming,
Free—
And easy—
Verse :
And all its obvious axioms to rehearse.

One who had praised the pelage of the roe
In pried iambics of his own devising,
Broke off his improvising
To link an arm with one who footed slow ;

A sleek Hedonic with purpureal chin,
And arch-malevolent grin,
Soul deep in an old-fashioned malady called
Sin.

And others in their melic motley dressed
About the Master pressed :
The restaurant roysterer with his hectic motto,
The soul of Art is one long glorious blotto ;
The tinkling trifler and the stanza-spinner,
The anarch wild
To rhymeless, rude, cacophony beguiled ;
Unrealists, echoes, clever counterfeits,
All indurated by their smug conceits ;
With languid, low reverberating hum
They come, they come.

Roland Roulade
The best-praised bard
Of indolent reviewers, now surveys
' The mob of gentlemen who *sing* with ease,'
With, oh ! such ease—
Rewarded by a paroxysm of praise
From simple souls who are not hard to please.
A gesture—and the plangent buzz is stilled :
And all the little airs that erst had caught
Those witlings' whispers hushed to nothingness
In wavy circles hovered to be filled
With bardic wisdom to a rapture wrought.
And Silence like a sad sea lady fled
With forward bending head
Into her calm oblivious wilderness.

All through the golden afternoon his tongue
Stroked the soft air with silver syllable.
He told them how all subjects should be
 sung
And touched on topics that were trill-able
By singers apt. His words like petals floated
Fluttered and fell, as when a rose in July
Upon its pliant stem is tumble-tost
By shoving breeze : and not one fell un-noted,
No casual hint was lost,
Each, each was seized on duly :—
The age-old wrinkle that the tortuous trope
In simple seeming dight
Will often times
Bring more success than verse of vaster scope
Ambition aches to write
Or duodedecimos of rudely wanton rhymes.

The rhymers raise their eyes
With Keats's wild surmise,
The bards that will be howling at all hours
With William Wordsworth's powers,
And such as with their filching fingers take
The portion of a greedy boy from Blake,
Who weave the thurible, chrism and oubliette
That Thompson did beget
Into the pattern of their pleached parterre
With all the air
Of conquerors ; the rifling wits that range
Through Shakespeare for a lyric rich and
 strange,

And miner poets delving deep and long
In old, forgotten galleries of song :—
Their eyes, pale beacons, flame
As lifted high they meet the level beam
Of him who reigns supreme
At the douce, fructuous, ineluctable game.

The dial in the old quadrangle told
The golden moments scurrying away
From fiends crepuscular that wrapped and
rolled

Their shady scarf about the eyes of day ;
And still the discourse grave
Flowed on, wave following wave,
Lapping the shores of nubile intellect.

Now was his counsel how to gratify

The small, small fry,

The gross and inelect,

Amusement seekers moved to an elation

By jingle and sensation ;

And now in silver vocables he gave

Enticement full to rave,

To indulge the wilful mood, the rhymy whim

In consequential hymn

Gemmed with strange words culled from
remoter ages.

To spread hot colours o'er their purple pages

He told the need, and how to cozen the herd

With epithet obscene and sly salacious word.

And while the veined hands about him raised
With cymbal-beat his glut of wisdom praised,

Roland Roulade, communicative growing,
His body forward throwing,
Revealed anew his dædal gift of song.
He spoke of that far-off, unhappy time
When he was prisoned by tyrannic rhyme.
Pause he observed and Scansion, Measure, Beat
Perforce, for Grammar's gyves did gaol his feet ;
No passion strove for utterance, no thought
Possessed his brain, but in due season brought
Its ante-natal curse :
A claim to be expressed in fit concinnous verse

But now, O happy time, O Liberty !
The singer soars above such antique lets.
Discipline, dull dominie, no longer frets
His festinate spirit. Bounden by no tie
Comes his chaotic, shapeless ecstasy.
The silly stars, the fragrant-foolish flowers,
The legendary lady of the night,
The round, industrious sun whose working
hours
Are never finished, the weak human wight,
Creatures of skin and scale, and fell and feather ;—
Such hapless toys of circumstance obey
A law by which their existence hangs together,
Only the singer of our licensed day
Owns no authority, or law, or sway.
So gave the Master his own recipe
For making poetry what it ought to be.
O happy, happy, happy libertee !

No principles, no laws, no pangs, no pains,
No slavish service, meek obedience
To hectoring Prosody
His rhetoric constrains.
No deference to sense,
No taste, no thought, no reverence, no plan
Informs his lines not even a super-man
Can scan :
Not his Muse one sad sister of the Nine
Wooed with wrung tears fetched from a break-
ing heart,
And single service in a state divine,
The vigilance of one who dwells apart
From mortal things. Oh, no, Oh, No !
He matches his misfeature
With some stray earthly creature
That stretches amorous limbs deliciously,
Some wildered girl whose ignorance her bliss
is
A-riot on the sly
In long lip-lapping kisses.
Or haply some dun daughter of old Dis
Whose frantic boast it is,
Smiling in shame,
All virtues to have shed
And yielded up her dower of maidenhead
In Freedom's vaunted name.
With these he revels, such is now his boast
To that long-listening host,
Tasting the acrid savour of surprise
At new idolatries,

Feasting the senses, elegantly toying
With vague philosophies and crazy creeds
And fleshly Faiths. The idle hours employing
In yieldance to the needs
Of audiences most unfit and many ;
For thereby hangs the penny,
Which in all generations has been found
So much, much wiser than the foolish pound.

And so he has said his say,
And so he will take his way,
And so he will lilt his lay,
And so he will have his day,
And well he may.

But Oh !~~~
For other times
Come, come,
Come other rhymes.





OCCASION PERSUADES ME

COME, . . .
Occasion persuades me
To fashion a new poetry.
A flamboyant feast for the many
Instead of a faith for the few.
Therefore I will dare and dazzle
With sun splash and streaming star shower
And rainbow rhymes,
And shake
From my rufous locks
The clinging cobwebs of convention.

I will create curiously, cunningly,
With ardour, ambition,
Colour and cadence
A poetry of the Particular
(Let us hear no more
Of the ancient Aristotle).
I will chant a chant
Of Myself ;
All that really matters ;

I and the conjoined
Words, emotions, raptures,
Semblance of passions,
Delicate fancies, descriptions,
Word paintings faintly intelligible,
And my thoughts.
And my thoughts ! Ah, yes,
Dug circumspectly from tomes.

Curious,
When I come to consider it
How unimportant
Is all but myself to me ;
I
Who flatter an idle mood,
Dandle a froward notion,
The latest lightest desire,
The lightest slightest whim,
In an anguish of labour to lay
The thin evanescent ghost
Of an elderly, arid idea,
A-fluttering and a-flapping
And a-failing to fly
From the cote of my mind.

Sweet effervescence of Youth !
Oh, the lawless feelings excited
By a flickering pipistrelle chase
After unusual ways
Of expressing (as it were)
That which I dimly see,

Very tenuously grasp,
And barely feel at all ;
And yet which is not to be said
In prose.

Froth and foam on the wave !
Wind in the branchy tree !
Shimmer and glint on the sea !
Ah ! Ah, me !

But come, come,
Occasion persuades me
To fashion a new poetry.
I will hymn the Accidental,
And project the pageantry
Of our pagan paradise,
And, *in situ*,
Pleasant Sunday Afternoons
In Hell.

In the abomination of desolation
I will roll down to the restaurants,
So garish, so gay,
I will importune the uncorseted
In night clubs,
I will tumble Thais in Soho,
Talking and tickling
And rolling ' a *gay* eye or so.'
I will pour the peony pyjama-ed wine
Into long-throated glasses,
And wring a rhyme from a hiccup.
I will etch unpleasing pictures
Of the fish stalls of Hoxton,

Draw to the life
Sleek millionaires with the symbolic cigar,
Caricature jewel-behung women
With twisted carmine souls.
Day long I will dawdle
In the studios
And give a classic air
To bare banalities,
And be bizarre, besotted,
Grotesque, insurgent or fantastical.

I will season my song
With frolic and gesture in vast forests,
I will meditate the monkey
And cull a simile
From the ochre ape
A-swing in the trees.
Even the graceless hippo
Shall serve his turn
To make a *sauce piquant*
Of brilliant blasphemy.

I will be all things to everybody,
Playwright and storyteller,
Historian and philosopher ;
Poetry shall be all-embracing,
The pretty wanton !
I will develop thews
And wrestle with facts,
I, the conqueror of the concrete,

The glorifier of the trivial,
The bard of the irrelevant,
For Occasion persuades me
To fashion a new poetry.





PALE POETRY

SOUL of the season's song !
A panting poem pale
I cast
 Among
A ghast-
 ly throng
Of singers who assail
My mellow melody,
Tho' framed in fancy frail and faery fantasy.

Mid modern muses murk
In loveliness I lilt,
 I fling
 To Time
A thing
 Sublime
In bud-like beauty built.

In silver sadness I
Repine when I perpend pale poems sometimes
die.

In mystic maze I muse
In odour eke occult.
 You mind
 That I'm
 A kind
 Of rhyme
Divinely difficult :
A pale-pink pleasaunce ground
With pensive poppies pranckt and purple
palings round.

Pon pinions pale I poise
Like bliss-born butterfly
 O'er rose
 I wreathe
 In throes.
 And breathe
Each echo's ecstasy.
In phantom fields I dwell,
Like love-lorn lily limp or azure asphodel.

Nor to my passion pale
One thought I bring, because

I try
 To see
If I
 Can be
As faint and fearful as
The poems of to-day ;
I think I am, and shall endure as long as they.





THE STRAYED THOUGHT

IN life what joy, what hope ?
Ah me, a veil is drawn
Athwart the sun, I grope
In darkness and lift up the cry of one forlorn.

I rose to find thee fled,
Whom I had made my own.
Thee, whom I cherished
And reared in my mind upon a dædal throne.

When first thou camest to me
In exultation wild
I sank upon one knee,
Nor half my love for thee had parent e'er
for child.

Yet ever wert thou coy
And wayward as the wind,
My pale elusive joy
But thou art gone and I am left with voided
mind.

For thee I sighed for fame,
Ink, inspiration, Thou !
The lustre of a name
To have, thou, one of three, shouldst have
informed me how.

On Thames's watery coil
I hoped, thou to inspire.
To fling my midnight oil,
And see her bosom blaze with dropping
globes of fire.

For thou wert all I had,
My Ewe-thought. Ah, unkind !
To fly me, too, too bad,
To coldly stray beyond the margin of my
mind.

A sense of loneliness
Came o'er thee straying thought !
But what of my distress ?
For now that thou art fled I have no mind
for aught.





BEREAVEMENT

O H, for a thought to chrystallize in rhyme !
From this rackt brainy cell to disengage
One thought ! To see it jewel the ample page
In inky grandeur, watch it mimp and mime
The mystery insusceptible to Time !
To pant in print ! What jocund parentage
Were mine to send it on an embassy
From mortal murk to some far fadeless clime.
And yet when I recall the bards that sing
Unheard, unheeded, o'er my senses steal
Such sad misgivings for my body's weal
That then my head I tuck beneath my wing,
Nor longer from myself the truth conceal :
A little yearning is a dangerous thing.





OTHER TIMES, OTHER MUSES

AWAY, away
With lovely lay,
Magical lyric and haunting rhyme,
To-day our verse
Is tense or terse,
It might be better,
It couldn't be worse,
But it gets there every time,
You know,
It gets there every time.

The plaintive bleats
Of Milton, Keats,
Tennyson, Wordsworth, Pope and Co.,
They had their day
In a modest way
But no one imagined
They'd come to stay.
And now they have had to go,
You know,
Now they have had to go.

Their simple songs
Of rights and wrongs,
Elegies, epics and odes sublime,
Appealed no doubt
To an age without
A morbid desire
To shriek and shout
In versicles free from rhyme,
You know,
In versicles free from rhyme.

They found a faith
In Beauty's wraith,
Truth was a spirit their souls adored,
But we, but we,
From the past set free
To Beauty and Truth
Will bend no knee,
We've tumbled them overboard,
You know,
We've tumbled them overboard.

Perhaps it's hard
On the ancient bard
That he should be ousted by such as us,
But that's just luck.
Lord love a duck !
If we have given
The bard the chuck
Why make such a ghastly fuss :—
You know,
Why make such a ghastly fuss ?

We make no claim
To the kind of fame
That came to the bards of the jog-trot gang,
Our tunes we hum
With a rum tee tum
We clash the cymbal
And beat the drum
With an intellectual bang,
You know,
With a jolly old Georgian bang.

We are big-brained boys
And we make a noise,
Noisily, loudly, as loud we can,
We write with will—
We've tummies to fill—
We pen our poems,
Present our bill
With a tear for the 'also ran,'
You know,
A tear for the 'also ran.'





A SONG

THE moon is staring in the yard,
The rose is listening on the tree,
Emotion surges in the bard,
That is, in me.

Twenty pebbles fret the beach,
And many million pebbles more,
And every pebble this can teach :
No sea without its shore.

There is a mystery in the wind,
A sense of something in the air,
Which those who seek shall surely find,
And those who find shall share.

O England is a gaudy grot,
Thrice happy country of the free ;
It hears my song and murmurs not
And lets me be.





PHILANTHROCITE THE GAY

MAXIMILIAN PHILANTHROCITE
In sin and such was mellow,
His voice was soft like bread and milk,
He played upon the cello,
He had a flat in Kensington,
The door was painted yellow.

At the chicanery of love
No amorist was feater,
His rake-hell rhymes were famous for
Transilience of metre :
In each and all he chimed the charms
Of Mam'selle Fantanita.

She was a girl, a lovely girl,
Who o'er the footlights hovered
In mazy dance ; a jewel, a bead
Her beauty barely covered.
True, there were whispers here and there
That she was over-lovered.

She yearned for joys no world could give,
She sang the whole day through,
' I would I were a wam-wam bird
Up in the wolly blue.
I would not dance my soul away
If I could fly like you.'

The flat of Max Philanthrocite
Joined that of Fantanita,
And so it was quite natural
That he one day should meet her,
As she was taking for a run
Her pekingese, Lord Petre.

Philanthrocite knew no restraint
Twice twenty times he kissed her,
Screaming her beauty made him mad—
That he could not resist her— ;
He asked her would she be to him
His feminine of Mister.

On Fantanita's glowing cheek
The blushes did deploy,
Nor lovelier looked in ravishment
The paramour of Troy ;
Her troubled heart went sping, spong,
Like a Russian clock-work toy.

Now Fantanita had a brother
Who was both tall and strong,
He swore by Jumka when he saw

That there was something wrong
With Fantanita's heart that it
Should crepitate sping, spong.

And so to Max Philanthrocite
He phrensy-rapt did go
To learn if what he haply thought
As possible was so,
Or whether Fantanita had,
As she affirmed, said No.

The gay Philanthrocite received
The brother with mock gravity,
And said with insolent *aplomb*
And calefacient suavity,
'I own to predilections for,—
What people call depravity.

I fancy it is known that I
Embezzled from my brother,
I also duped five flappers frail
And bolted with their mother,
But the true artist's conscience, sir,
Such trifles do not bother . . .'

Whereat a Heaven-piercing screech
Through Kensington was heard,
And on the gay Philanthrocite
The brother's maulies whirred !
He beat his body fifty times
For every spoken word.

He twined thin fingers in the hair
Of Max Philanthrocite,
The hues he painted on his flesh
Were yellow, green and white ;
And when he had killed him five times five
He burred with delight.

And when the throe-ful deed was done
The corse he roughly bore
And propped it up against the jamb
Of Fantanita's door,
And left it for an hour or two
To welter in its gore.

When Fantanita heard what had
Befallen Philanthrocite
She marbles shed instead of tears,
Three hundred every night.
The grief of this world-weary girl
Was abject in its plight.

She bade adieu to crust and cup,
She would not dance or sing :
Each finger paled unmanicured
Within its garish ring :
She said her heart was broken and
She wore it in a sling.

And soon 'twas clear her end was near,
Up in the wolly blue

The wam-wam bird was calling, calling
His mortal mate unto.
' I come, I come.' She answered, and
Her gentle spirit up flew.

Her brother shrugged and closed her eyes,
Twin thieves of shame and sorrow,
His sister Fantanita he
Interred upon the morrow.
Her tears were all her monument
Upon the Hills of Yorrow.





MELIGO POPHOLOI

MELIGO POPHOLOI rose at dawn,
Opened the window with stretch and
yawn,
Shook out the dreams from her sunset head,
Slipped on her slippers and aired her bed,
Slid to her mirror, lolled in a chair
Meligo Popholoi brushed her hair.

*Meligo, Meligo, child, beware,
Whose are the footsteps on the stair?*

Meligo Popholoi brushed each tress
Curling like flame on her soft night dress,
Wondering vaguely as she sat there
Which of her pretty frocks she would wear.
Laughing she rose and the garment she wore
Dropt with a whispering cry to the floor.

*Meligo, Meligo, O, take care,
Save for your slippers you're beauty bare!*

Meligo Popholoi dropped her brush
As into her bedroom there came with a rush
A gaggle of poets to goggle and stare
At Meligo Popholoi standing there ;—
Standing there in a natural pose,
Meligo Popholoi *sans* her clothes.

*Meligo, Meligo, are you wise
To bare your beauty to earth-bound eyes?*

Meligo Popholoi gave a yell
Snatched up a sark and pressed the bell,
Angrily facing with sob and shout
Peepers and Priers she drove them out.

But ere she had hooked the last hook of her
dress
Twenty new poems were in the press.

*Meligo, Meligo, child, don't cry,
Blind are the poets who peep and pry.*





AMOK

WHERETO, whereto, sad insatiate spirit,
Whereto have you strayed,
From the heat of chance desires seeking
Forbidden fruit tree's shade?
Prone upon a beech bole palely panting
Gleams your torso white,
All agog with carnal zest awaiting
The old Pander Night.

Then will come a troupe of naked gay girls,
Black and yellow and grey.
You will glimpse them in the pools of moon-
shine
Lave their limbs alway
To and fro and in and out careering,
Circling and a-stream,
In their leapings arm and thigh and shoulder
Silverly will gleam.

Golden girlhood ripened for love's harvest,
Quivering stooks and sheaves.
Beauty-burdened, opulent, inviting,
Soft, warm Elves and Eves.
Arms a-wide and eager eyes a-staring,
Lush ripe lips ajar,
Flower faces to the light uplifted
Of one dew-dimmed star.

You bright girls anon will fall to kissing,
Proffered lips and eyes,
Crushing in your arms their yielding sweetness,
Spite of coos and cries.
Pressing back from shy etiolate faces
Wrack of radiant curls,
Rosy ronions meet for your embraces,
Bubble-breasted girls.





PETER BELL THE FOURTH

HE takes the perfume from the rose,
He dims the radiance of the sun,
All things that may be learnt he knows,
Than he a cleverer brain has none.

He grabs a swallow from the sky,
All creatures small that creep and run
He snares for his poetic pie,
And in it flings them one by one.

A woman's loveliness he wrongs,
From man his soul he steals at last,
He mocks their anguish with his songs,
And drowns the voices of the past.

He clamours Heaven with a shout
Until the Light is turned to Dark,
The Book of Beauty opens out
And on it leaves a finger mark.





‘——BY WANT OF THOUGHT’

*A fault (I am told) of our poets, as such,
Is thinking too little and writing too much.*

I CANNOT think, I cannot think
Why all my songs should be
But little more than paper, ink
And pretty melody.
My teeming numbers know no pause,
From no device I shrink
To make them great. Is it because—
I cannot think, I cannot think?





A SOLILOQUY

TO boom or not to boom,—
There is no question
Whether 'tis better
To wear a lurid tie
Or some strange sock
Of fierce magenta hue ;
Or with self-tonsured beard
To force presentment dim
To Avon's gentle bard ;
Or whether passing as
A Romish partizan
Were not a fairly strong
And blessed advertisement ;—
These, these are questions.
If I should launch my barque
On high politic seas
With ever bellying sails
Adjusted to the boom

Which I shall raise,
And deftly turn the lock
Of public approbation
With some such key ;—
Methinks that were indeed
Smart, and not overdone.

Then there's the interview.
A stale, unworthy prop
For modern *litterateur* ;
To quarrel
With some booming damosel—
No, that's a threadbare trick
Worn out these many years ;
While fabled ancestry,
And rude jocosities
And all the thousand shams
An author dare do
Are foredone.
And yet boom, boom I must
While on such slender legs
My crippled grammar runs,
And such dull, morbid nonsense
Comes teeming from my brain.

Sweet hoarding ! thou shalt bear
Upon thy woody bosom
Huge posters heralding
My most unworthy tales ;
And with thy Sauce and Soap,
Pickles and sewing machines,

The figments of my mighty intellect
Shall play an equal part.
Thus millionaires
Makes tradesmen of us all.





TO A TRUMPET

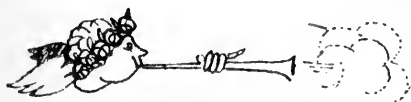
I HAVE a trumpet rich in sound,
I blew it long before I sang it
My tomb on, when I'm underground
Oh, hang it !

It hangs conveniently to hand
And in opinion's face I sound it
When his voice cries against me and
Confound it !

I sundry chords upon it play
But at the fear o'er use might smash it
The tear starts in my eye ; away—
Oh, dash it !

Strange when (in hunting phrase) I wind
This brassy instrument audacious
It should reveal me wise, refined,
Good, gracious !

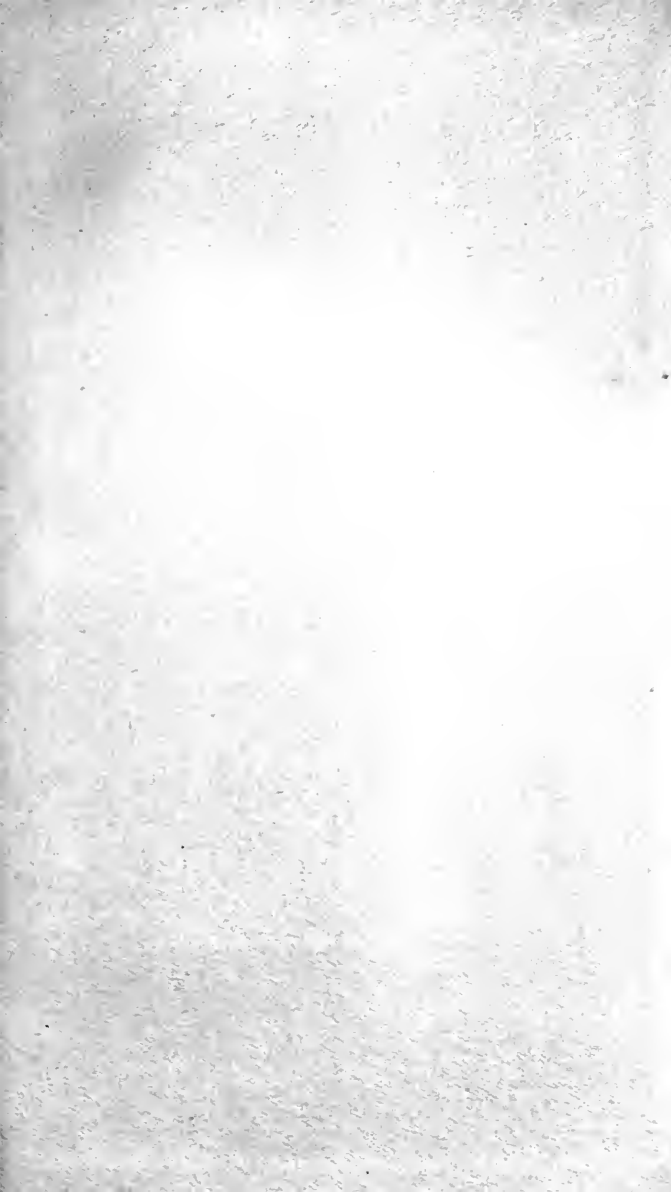
I am, you surely understand,
A rather more than minor poet ;
Then take my trumpet, reader, and,
Oh, blow it !



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